

Message Text

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ACTION AID-59

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 ISO-00 IGA-01 EB-07 L-03 /089 W

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P R 071445Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1127

INFO AMEMBASSY ABRJJAN

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 SECTIONS NIAMEY 2633

FOR AID-AFR/CWR-SHEAR AND AF-BLAKE FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAID, NG,DM, ML

SUBJECT: COTONOU -GAO SHIPMENT

REF: A. NIAMEY 2370; B. COTONOU 886; C. COTONOU 891; D: COTNOU 943

E. COTONOU 949

SUMMARY: AS SEEN FROM NIAMEY, SHIPEMNT OF 6,000 TONS OF US SORGHUM FROM COTONOU TO GAO MAY BE RUNNING INTO SERIOUS TROUBLE BECAUSE OF PORT CONGESTION, DIFFICULTIES WITH FREIGHT FORWARDERS, INADEQUATE STORAGE, ROAD CONDITIONS, CONFLICTING PRIORITIES WITH OTHER ESSENTIAL ITEMS NEEDED BY NIGER, ETC. BELIEVE IT URGENTLY NECESSARY TO TAKE HARD LOOK WHERE WE ARE AND WHERE WE ARE GOING BEFORE GETTING IN ANY DEEPER. WE RECOMMEND (A) IMMEDIATE FREEZE ON ANY FURTHER SHIPMENTS FROM US; (B) DIVERSION TO ABIDJAN OF GRAIN ON HIGH SEAS; (C) ARRANGEMENTS TO PROTECT ADEQUATELY GRAIN ALREADY IN COTONOU; (D) URGENT REEVALUATION OF GAO'S NEEDS IN LIGHT OF ASSESSMENT IN NIAMEY 2370; (E) IF NEED FOR ALL 6000 TONS ESTABLISHED, SHIP BALANCE OF GRAIN ACROSS SAHARA. END SUMMARY.

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1. ARRIVAL IN COTONOU BETWEEN JUNE 26 AND JULY 2 OF THREE GRAIN SHIPS HAS PUT 3964 MT OF US SORGHUM INTO THIS PORT HEADED FOR MALI. NOT ONE TON OF THIS GRAIN HAS LEFT AS YET FOR GAO AND PROSPECT FOR SUBSTANTIAL MOVEMENT IN NEAR FUTURE NOT VERY BRIGHT. IN NEXT FEW WEEKS WE CAN ANTICIPATE MAJOR HEADACHES AND WRANGLING WHILE GRIAN PILES UP WITH SOME OF IT UNDER TARPS AND INADEQUATELY PROTECTED.

2. THIS COTONOU-GAO OPERATION SOMEHOW SEEMS TO HAVE DEVELOPED MOMENTUM ALL ITS OWN AND INCREASINGLY WITHOUT REGARD TO ENVIRONMENT, NEEDS AND PROBLEMS IN WHICH IT HAS TO BE CONDUCTED. SO FAR, WE HAVE BEEN FORTUNATE IN NOT INCURRING LOSSES OR SPOILAGE WHILE MOVING ABOUT 200,000 TONS OF GRAIN TO NIGER OVER LAST TWO YEARS, AND WE FACE FORTHCOMING VISIT OF GAO TEAM WITH CONFIDENCE. UNFORTUNATELY, COTONOU-GAO OPERATION MAY BE HEADED FOR PROBLEMS. BELIEVE IT URGENTLY NECESSARY TO TAKE HARD LOOK AT PROJECT AND RECONSIDER WHERE WE ARE AND WHERE WE ARE GOING BEFORE GETTING IN ANY DEEPER.

3. ELEMENTS OF PROBLEM AS SEEN FROM NIAMEY ARE AS FOLLOWS:

A) FOOD STOCKS ARE COMING IN TO COTONOU FASTER THAN THEY ARE GOING NORTH. TOTAL RELIEF STOCKS ON HAND AS OF JUNE 21 WERE 8344 TONS AND AS OF JUNE 26 9112 TONS. SINCE THEN WE HAVE DUMPED ANOTHER 2446 TONS ON PORT.

B) COTONOU PORT ON BASIS OF RECENT PERFORMANCE CANNOT POSSIBLY COPE WITH THESE STOCKS PLUS ESSENTIAL COMMERCIAL FOODS AND OTHER COMMODITIES. INCREASINGLY, STOCKS WILL BE INADEQUATELY STORED AND MORE EXPOSED TO ELEMENTS. WE UNDERSTAND FROM CANADIAN AMBASSADOR MATHIEU THAT THERE HAS BEEN SERIOUS SPOILAGE OF CANADIAN FLOUR WHICH HAS ALREADY GIVEN RISE TO AWKWARD PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS IN OTTAWA. CANADIANS ADMIT THEY MADE BAD MISTAKE IN DEPOSITING 8,000 TONS OF FLOUR AND SEMOLINA IN COTONOU AT ONE TIME AND WITH NO FIRM SCHEDULE FOR FORWARDING. AS RESULT MATHIEU'S RECENT TRIP TO NIAMEY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HE WAS ABLE TO OBTAIN SPECIAL PRIORITIES FROM PRESIDENT KOUNTCHE FOR BETTER STORAGE OF CANADIAN STOCKS IN NIGER WAREHOUSES AT COTONOU AND FOR SHIPMENT NORTH BUT CANADIANS STILL HAVE OVER 6,000 TONS TO MOVE AND THESE DELAYS NOT EXACTLY CONDUCIVE TO IMPROVING QUALITY OF THESE COMMODITIES. WITH OUR SHIPS ARRIVING ONE AFTER ANOTHER AND PIPELINE APPARENTLY FULL WE SEEM TO BE FALLING INTO SAME TRAP AS CANADIANS.

C. IF PORT IS IN A MESS OCDN OPERATION AND FREIGHT
FORWARDER SITUATION EVEN MORE SO. EMBASSY AND AID TEAM
IN COTONOU HAVE BEEN DOING MAGNIFICENT JOB UNDER
EXTREMELY ADVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES--AS THEY DID LAST
YEAR IN MOVING GRAIN TO NIGER. HOWEVER, WHAT WITH UNSETTLED
SECURITY SITUATION IN COTONOU AREA,
OCD,XSOCOPAO#CONFRONTATIONS (COTONOUHXOROLN#OCDN PROBLEMS

OF INTENAL PRIORITIES AND SQUEAKY HINGE APPROVAL
(COTONOU 886) AND VERY SERIOUS NEEDS OF NIGER AND
OF OTHER DONORS WITH WHOM WE ARE IN EFFECT COMPETING, WE
WILL BE VERY LUCKY IF WE CAN MOVE 1500 TONS MONTHLY BY
TRUCK FROM COTONOU ORBY TRUCK/TRAIN TRANSPORT FROM PARAKOU
TO GAO, EXCEPT POSSIBLY BY PAYING OUTRAGIOUS EXTORTIONIST
RATES WHICH MAY WELL BE OCDN AND FREIGHT FORWARDER NAME OF
THE GAME.

D) THERE IS ALSO PROBLEM OF ROAD CONDITIONS FROM
NIGER BORDER TO GAO(SEE PARA 5 NIAMEY 2370). IF WE
ARE LUCKY ROAD WILL STAY OPEN UNTIL LATE JULY.NQTER
THAT ROAD CONDITIONS WILL BE SUCH THAT DRIVERS WILL
REFUSE TRIP OR VERY LIKELY GET STUCK. IT ONLY TAKES
ONE OR TWO SUCH TRUCKS TO BLOCK ROAD AS WE FOUND OUT
LAST YEAR ON TAHOUA-AGADEZ ROAD DURING RAINS WHEN ONE TRUCK
STUCK IN MUD COULD BLOCK ROAD FOR UP TO TWO
WEEKS. GON ANSWER WAS TO MOBILIZE CAMEL AND DONKEY
CONVOYS TO BYPASS TRUCK. IS MALI PREPARED
DO THE SAME? WHAT IS POINT OF KEEPING PIPELINE TO
COTONOU FULL WHEN WE FACE AN END OF JULY ROAD
DEADLINE. WHAT HAPPENS TO THIS GRAIN UNTIL ROAD
REOPENS SOME TIME IN SEPTEMBER? DOES COTONOU HAVE THE
STORAGE SPACE AND DO WE HAVE THE MEANS AND FACILITIES
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TO INSURE ITS ADEQUATE PROTECTION DURING THIS PERIOD?

NOTE: SECTION 1 OF 2 NIAMEY 2633; #PARA. 3.C. AS RECEIVED.
CORRECTION TO FOLLOW.

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ACTION AID-59

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 ISO-00 IGA-01 EB-07 L-03 /089 W

----- 077134

P R 071445Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1128

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 NIAMEY 2633

FOR AID-AFR/CWR-SHEAR AND AF-BLAKE FROM AMBASSADOR

E) FROM OUR OWN PAROCHIAL POINT OF VIEW MOST IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION IS PRESENT SERIOUS STATE OF NIGER'S ECONOMY AND ESPECIALLY THAT OF URBAN CENTERS BROUGHT ABOUT BY TRANSPORT BOTTLENECK IN DAHOMEY. GENERALLY POOR OCDN PERFORMANCE COMBINED WITH RECENT BREAKDOWNS HAVE LEFT LANDLOCKED NIGER CRITICALLY SHORT OF ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES AND COUNTRY IS LITERALLY LIVING FROM DAY TO DAY IN BASIC UTILITIES AND TRANSPORT NEEDS. NIGELEC WHICH PROVIDES ALL OF NIAMEY'S ELECTRICITY HAS BEEN RUNNING FOR SEVERAL WEEKS WITH LESS THAN 24 HOUR FUEL SUPPLY AND SEVERAL TIMES HAS BEEN NEAR SHUTDOWN. NIAMEY AND ARLIT, WHICH HAVE SPECIAL PRIORITIES BECAUSE OF MINING OPERATIONS, ARE VIRTUALLY ONLY CENTERS WITH ASSURED SUPPLY OF GAS. BECAUSE OF DELAYS IN CANADIAN FLOUR SHIPMENT, BREAD IS IN SHORT SUPPLY AND PRICE OF LOCAL BREAD USED BY GENERAL POPULACE WENT UP 33PCT RECENTLY. PRICES OTHER ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES ALSO SOARING. IN SHORT, NIGER PAYING FULL PRICE FOR ITS LANDLOCKED STATUS AT TIME IT MAKING EVERY EFFORT TO RECOVER FROM DROUGHT. ACCORDINGLY, WE CANNOT IN GOOD

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CONSCIENCE GO TO GON AND ASK FOR SPECIAL OCDN OR OTHER CONSIDERATION FOR GAO SHIPMENTS UNLESS THERE IS OVER-RIDING NEED FOR THIS GRAIN IN MALI.

4. THIS BRINGS US TO BASIC QUESTION--WHAT IS THE NEED

IN 6TH REGION OF MALI AND HOW URGENT IS TI. WE MAY NOT HAVE SEEN ALL REPORTING ON SUBJECT AND ON SUCH JUDGEMENT WE OF COURSE DEFER TO EMBASSY BAMAKO. HOWEVER, FROM INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US AND ESPECIALLY RECNT TRIP OF FFP PEARSON TO GAO(NIAMEY 2370) WE HAVE IMPRESSION THAT (A) GOM'S OWN CONCERNS FOR 6TH REGION CANNOT BE CHARACTERIZE AS MOVTTIVATED BY SENSE OF HUMANITARIAN URGENCY; (B) LOCAL OFFICIALS

IN REGION NOT SURE HOW US SORGHUM WILL BE USED; AND (C) STORAGE FACILITIES IN GAO REGION INADEQUATE TO HANDLE 6000 TONS. POINTS MADE IN NIAMEY 2370 MUST BE ADDRESSED BEFORE WE GET ANY DEEPER INTO THIS OPERATION.

5. CONCLUSION: THIS SEEMS TO BE VENTURE BASED ON SHAKY PREMISES AND FRAUGHT WITH PROBLEMS AHEAD. IRONICAL THAT AFTER IMPRESSIVE RECORD IN MOVING VAST AMOUNTS OF GRAIN TO SAHEL LAST YEAR WITH MINIMUM OF PROBLEMS, THIS PHASE OF RELIEF OPERATION WE ARE MOUNTING THIS SUMMER TO MALI THREATENS TO BECOME FIASCO.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION REQUESTED:

A) IMMEDIATE FREEZE ON ANY FURTHER SHIPMENTS FROM US UNTIL NEED ESTABLISHED AND WE WORK OUT REALSITIC SCHEDULE TO MOVE GRAIN ALREADY IN COTONOU TO GAO WHICH TAKES INTO ACCOUNT OCDN PERFORMANCE, ROAD CONDITIONS AND GAO'S ABILITY TO ABSORB GRAIN AND STORE IT SAFELY.

B) DIVERSION OF GRAIN ON HIGH SEAS TO ABIDJAN WHERE WE UNDERSTAND MORE ADEQUATE STORAGE AVAILABLE THAN COTONOU. IN LONG RUN SHOULD BE BETTER TO KEEP IT IN GOOD SHAPE IN ABIDJAN THAN SUFFER LOSSES IN COTONOU PENDING DECISION WHAT TO DO WITH IT.

C) ARRANGEMENTS TO INSURE THAT GRAIN ALREADY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IN COTONOU GETS UNDER COVER AND WE HAVE ON HAND WHATEVER NEEDED TO PROVIDE AS MUCH PROTECTION AS POSSIBLE DURING SUMMER MONTHS. ON BASIS OF RECORD TO DATE BEST WE CAN HOPE FOR IS TO MOVE ABOUT 1500 TONS TO GAO THIS MONTH BEFORE ROAD CLOSES, LEAVING ABOUT 2500 TONS TO BE STORED AND PROTECTED IN COTONOU DURING BALANCE OF SUMMER.

D) DEFINITIVE AND URGENT REEVALUATION ON NEED FOR 6000 TONS, URGENCY OF NEED, PLANS FOR UTILIZATION, STORAGE FACILITIES, ETC.--ALL THIS IN RELATION TO WHAT GOM ITSELF IS DOING TO UTILIZE EXISTING STOCKS AND MOVE ITS OWN STOCKS INTO REGION. DOES ASSESSMENT

IN NIAMEY 2370 STAND OR SHOULD IT BE REVISED.

E) IF NEED AND URGENCY CLEARLY ESTABLISHED,
MOVE BALANCE OF GRAIN TO GAO ACROSS SAHARA AS LAST
YEAR. IN LONG RUN, PROBABLY CHEAPER AND QUICKER.HECK

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Draft Date: 07 JUL 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
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